

Harris County Citizen Corps

Since Tropical Storm Allison and the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, the people of Harris County have acted with courage, compassion and unity. To capture this spirit of service throughout the country, President George W. Bush has called on all Americans to dedicate at least two years of their lives—the equivalent of 4,000 hours—in service to others. He launched the Citizen Corps initiative to inspire and enable Americans to find ways to serve their communities and country.

In response to the President's initiative, the Harris County Citizen Corps Council coordinates with volunteer groups like the Red Cross, The Salvation Army, the United Way and Citizen Corps programs to identify volunteer opportunities.

The Harris County Citizen Corps' website, www.harriscountycitizencorps.com, is designed to help citizens find volunteer and training opportunities. It offers useful information on how to be better prepared for a variety of emergency situations. The website allows volunteers to track their hours as they work toward the President's goal. Everyone can make a difference, whether it is with a local school, church group or one of the many participating organizations working throughout the region.

Some participating organizations:

- Amateur Radio Emergency Service
- American Red Cross
- Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Galveston-Houston
- City of Houston Fire and Emergency Services
- City of Houston Office of Emergency Management
- City of Houston Police Department
- East Harris County Manufacturers Association
- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Greater Houston Partnership
- Harris County Fire Marshal
- Harris County Health and Environmental Services
- Harris County Office of Emergency Management
- Harris County Sheriff's Department
- Houston Independent School District
- Jewish Community Center of Houston
- Port of Houston
- Texas Medical Center
- The Salvation Army
- United Way
- Victim Assistance Centre
- Victim Relief Ministries



Harris County's first Community Emergency Response Team



"Working together, we can make a difference."

—County Judge
Robert Eckels

Proud Partner
of the



Volunteer Today!

www.harriscountycitizencorps.com

Citizen Corps Programs



The **Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)** trains people in neighborhoods, the workplace and schools in basic disaster response skills, like fire suppression, urban search and rescue and medical operations. It helps them take a more active role in emergency preparedness.



The **Medical Reserve Corps (MRC)** program coordinates the skills of practicing and retired physicians, nurses, other health professionals and citizens interested in health issues who are eager to address their communities' public health needs and help during large-scale emergencies.



The **Neighborhood Watch** program is an excellent way to strengthen and secure our communities. In addition to serving a crime prevention function, Neighborhood Watch can help bring neighborhood residents together to focus on disaster and terrorism preparedness.



Volunteers in Police Service Program (VIPS) provide support for police departments by tapping civilian volunteers to supplement their communities' law enforcement professionals. This frees up sworn officers for front line duty.

Volunteer now!

Securing our safety and freedom requires that we all work together. Every American has a critical role to play. What can you do to help? Volunteer now for Citizen Corps!

10 tips for wise volunteering

Research the causes or issues important to you.

Look for a group that works with issues about which you feel strongly, or start one yourself. You can rally your neighbors to clean up that vacant lot on the corner, patrol the neighborhood, paint an elderly neighbor's house, take turns keeping an eye on the ailing person down the street or form a group to advocate for a remedy to that dangerous intersection in your neighborhood.

Consider the skills you have to offer.

If you enjoy outdoor work, have a knack for teaching or just enjoy interacting with people, you may want to look for volunteer work that would incorporate these aspects of your personality. Many positions require a volunteer who has previous familiarity with certain equipment. For one of these positions, you might decide to do something comparable to what you do on the job.

Would you like to learn something new?

Perhaps you would like to learn a new skill or gain exposure to a new situation. Many nonprofit organizations seek out people who are willing to learn. Realize beforehand, however, that such work might require a time commitment for training before the actual volunteer assignment begins.

Combine your goals.

Look for volunteer opportunities that will also help you achieve other life goals. For example, if you want to lose a few extra pounds, pick an active volunteer opportunity such as cleaning a park or working with kids.

Don't over-commit your schedule.

Make sure the volunteer hours you want to give fit into your hectic life. If you are unsure about your availability or want to see how the work suits you before making an extensive commitment, see whether the organization will start you on a limited number of hours until you get the feel of things.

Nonprofits may have questions, too.

While most nonprofit organizations are eager to find volunteer help, they have to be careful when accepting the services you offer. You may be asked to come in for an interview, fill out a volunteer application or describe your qualifications and your background just as you would at an interview for a paying job. It is in the organization's interest and more beneficial to the people it serves to make certain you have the skills needed, that you are truly committed to doing the work and that your interests match those of the nonprofit.

Consider volunteering as a family.

Think about looking for a volunteer opportunity suitable for parents and children working together, or for a husband and wife to take on as a team. When a family volunteers to work together at a nonprofit organization, the experience can bring them closer together, teach young children the value of giving their time and effort and introduce everyone in the family to skills and experiences never before encountered.

Virtual volunteering?

Yes, there is such a thing! If you have computer access and the necessary skills, some organizations now offer the opportunity to do volunteer work over the computer. This might take the form of giving free legal advice, typing a college term paper for a person with a disability or simply keeping in contact with a shut-in who has e-mail.

I never thought of that!

Many community groups are looking for volunteers. Here are some volunteer opportunities that may not have crossed your mind:

- Day care centers, neighborhood watch organizations, public schools and colleges, halfway houses, community theaters, drug rehabilitation centers, fraternal organizations and civic clubs
- Retirement centers and homes for the elderly, Meals-on-Wheels programs, church or community-sponsored soup kitchens or food pantries
- Museums, art galleries and monuments
- Community choirs, bands and orchestras
- Prisons, neighborhood parks, youth organizations, sports teams, after-school programs and shelters for battered women and children
- Historical restorations, battlefields and national parks

Give voice to your heart through your giving and volunteering!

Bring your heart and your sense of humor to your volunteer service, along with your enthusiastic spirit, which in itself is a priceless gift. What you'll get back will be immeasurable!

Accept the President's challenge and volunteer today!

Sign up and find out about these and other opportunities within Harris County and begin registering your volunteer hours at www.harriscountycitizencorps.com or by calling 281-JOIN NOW (281-564-6669).

